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**GEORGIAN
YOUNG
LAWYERS'
ASSOCIATION**

Free, Fair and Equal Electoral-Political 2022-2025 Cycle in Georgia

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INTRODUCTION

Since August 2019, the Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (GYLA) has been actively engaged in the implementation of the “Free, Fair, and Equal Election” project across Georgia, which encompasses the electoral political cycle spanning from 2022 to 2025. Among the project's primary objectives is the advancement of the electoral landscape by means of monitoring and evidence-based advocacy. In pursuit of this goal, our organization diligently monitors ongoing policy processes and formulates recommendations that are disseminated to the public and presented to key decision-makers. Presently, we are pleased to introduce Newsletter #51, offering insights into the significant events of December that have significantly shaped the political environment.

1. RELATIONS BETWEEN GEORGIA AND THE EUROPEAN UNION

1.1. Activity of non-governmental organizations while waiting for the candidate status

While waiting for the decision of the European Council on granting the EU candidate country status, dozens of local non-governmental organizations launched an active campaign.¹ The representatives of the organizations held meetings with the representatives of the member states of the European Union in Georgia.² They also sent a written appeal to the embassies asking for their support to grant the country candidate status.³

In addition to direct communication with the embassies of EU member states, local non-governmental organizations announced a public march on December 9.⁴ The procession started from Republic Square and ended at Europe Square.⁵ The world's largest flag (22 meters wide and 33 meters long) of the European Union was sewn especially for the event.⁶ The President of Georgia, Salome Zourabichvili, also joined the procession.⁷

1.2. Address of Prime Minister Irakli Gharibashvili to the European leaders

On December 13, the Prime Minister of Georgia, Irakli Gharibashvili, addressed a letter to the President of the European Council, the President of the European Commission, the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Spain, the EU chairing country, and the leaders of other EU member states.⁸ In the letter, Gharibashvili expressed gratitude for the recognition of Georgia's European perspective in June 2022 and acknowledged the recent recommendation of the European Commission to grant Georgia candidate status.⁹ According to Gharibashvili, the government of Georgia is fully mobilized to continue and further accelerate the implementation of necessary reforms on the way to joining the European Union.¹⁰

¹ “Ambassador Fischer on EU candidate status: Germany stands by Georgia” news portal: “europetime.eu”, December 1, 2023, available at: <https://shorturl.at/HKVZ2>, updated: 05.02.2024.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ “Your vote for the European Union” - the largest flag of the European Union was unfurled in Tbilisi”, information portal “Civil.ge”, December 9, 2023, available at: <https://civil.ge/ka/archives/573503>, updated: 05.02.2024.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ “Written address of Prime Minister Irakli Gharibashvili”, official information website of the Prime Minister of Georgia, December 13, 2023, available at: <https://shorturl.at/ioGWX>, updated: 05.02.2024.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

1.3. Georgia has been granted the status of a candidate country for the European Union

On December 14, the European Council granted Georgia the status of a candidate country for EU membership.¹¹ The said decision was based on the recommendation issued by the European Commission on November 8 regarding the granting of candidate status to Georgia.¹²

The President of Georgia, Salome Zourabichvili, described the adoption of the decision by the European Council as “an important stage for Georgia”, emphasizing the unwavering determination and contributions of the Georgian people throughout this process.¹³

Prime Minister of Georgia Irakli Gharibashvili thanked the leaders of the European Council for “recognizing Georgia’s civilizational choice” and expressed hope for future progress on the path of European integration.¹⁴

Chairman of the National Movement Levan Khabeishvili congratulated the Georgian people on receiving the candidate status.¹⁵ He highlighted the role played by Mikheil Saakashvili in the European integration process, noting that it was the third president of Georgia who first raised the EU flag at the Parliament of Georgia, marking a significant milestone in the history of independent Georgia.¹⁶

The EU summit concluded on December 15, with decisions to commence accession negotiations with Ukraine and Moldova, while granting Georgia the status of a candidate country.¹⁷ European Council President Charles Michel, alongside European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez, described the summit’s decision on the enlargement package as “emotional” during a press conference. He urged candidate countries to promptly implement the required reforms to advance their journey towards EU membership.¹⁸ Charles Michel assessed the enlargement of the European Union as an investment for peace, security and prosperity.¹⁹

1.4. Campaign of the President of Georgia “Our Voice to Europe”

Prior to the European Council’s final decision on Georgia’s candidate status, on December 13, President Salome Zourabichvili handed over the signatures collected as part of the ‘Our Voice to Europe’ campaign, initiated by her, to the EU Ambassador to Georgia, Pawel Herczynski.²⁰ The final event held in the Orbeliani palace was attended by current and former officials of Georgia, opposition politicians and representatives of the diplomatic corps.²¹

1.5. The government’s action plan regarding the implementation of the European Commission’s recommendations

According to the 2023 report on the EU enlargement policy, 9 main reservations of Georgia were defined, after which negotiations on the country’s accession to the European Union should be opened.²² As per the document, Georgia is required to ensure a free, fair, and competitive election process, fully consider the recommendations

¹¹ “Georgia has become a candidate country for EU membership”, the official website of the Public Broadcaster, December 14, 2023, available at: <https://1tv.ge/news/saqartvelo-evrokavshiris-wevrobis-kandidati-qveyana-gakhda/>, updated: 05.02.2024.

¹² “The European Commission recommended granting candidate status to Georgia”, information portal “Civil.ge”, November 8, 2023, available at: <https://civil.ge/ka/archives/568370>, updated: 05.02.2024.

¹³ “Georgian politicians welcome the granting of candidate status to Georgia”, news portal “Civil.ge”, December 15, 2023, available at: <https://civil.ge/ka/archives/574531>, updated: 05.02.2024.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ “Charles Michel: Enlargement decision is a signal of hope and confidence”, information portal “Civil.ge”, 16 December 2023, available at: <https://civil.ge/ka/archives/574740>, updated: 05.02.2024.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ “After the end of the campaign “Our Voice for Europe”, Zourabichvili handed over the signatures to the ambassador of the European Union”, information portal “Civil.ge”, December 14, 2023, available at: <https://civil.ge/ka/archives/574390>, updated: 05.02.2024.

²¹ Ibid.

²² “What does the 9 reservations include - the European Commission recommended granting candidate status to Georgia”, information portal “Radio Freedom”, November 8, 2023, available at: <https://shorturl.at/fuxHY>, updated: 05.02.2024.

of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, complete electoral reform, and guarantee adequate representation of voters well in advance of election day. Additionally, it must ensure the institutional independence of the election administration.

On December 25, the Government of Georgia published a document entitled “Action Plan for the Implementation of the Steps Defined for Georgia in the Communication on the European Commission’s 2023 Enlargement Policy”.²³ The document approved by the Governmental Commission for European Integration includes the steps outlined by the European Commission, the activities to be implemented, the implementation deadlines and the list of responsible agencies.²⁴

To achieve the outlined priorities concerning the elections, the plan approved by the government commission includes the following measures: convening the OSCE-ODIHR long-term observation mission for the 2024 elections, establishing effective cooperation formats between relevant authorities and observation organizations, and amending the election code regarding party/election financing.²⁵

It is noteworthy that civil organizations and opposition parties were not engaged in the process of developing and approving the action plan. The document appears to be quite general, failing to fully align with the recommendations outlined by the European Commission. Notably, it lacks specific steps aimed at ensuring the institutional independence of the election administration.

2. THE JOINT OPINION OF THE VENICE COMMISSION AND THE OSCE/ODIHR REGARDING THE MANNER OF STAFFING THE CEC

On December 19, the joint opinion of the Venice Commission and the OSCE Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights regarding the changes in the Election Code and the Regulations of the Parliament of Georgia was published.²⁶ The commission evaluated the legislative initiative, by which the procedure for staffing the Central Election Commission (CEC) was changed once again.²⁷

In contrast to the changes implemented in the summer of 2023, the new legislative initiative proposes that the support of 3/5 of the deputies (90) will be required, instead of a simple majority (76), in the first vote to select a candidate for the chairmanship and membership of the CEC.²⁸ And in the event that the candidate fails to gather the support of 90 deputies, they will have the opportunity to seek the support of 76 deputies twice during repeated voting. If successful, they can then occupy the position for a period of 5 years.²⁹ It is important to note that, as per the wording adopted within the framework of the Charles Michel agreement, the ruling party could independently elect candidates with 76 votes for a period of only six months.³⁰

According to the legislative initiative presented, the authority to nominate candidates for parliament remains with the chairman of the parliament instead of the president. In cases where even 76 votes are not collected in the parliament, the issue will be referred to the president for decision, although the likelihood of this process unfolding under conditions of a one-party majority is minimal. Additionally, the legislative initiative proposes the abolition

²³ “Measures for implementation of the steps determined by the European Commission for Georgia”, information portal “Civil.ge”, December 26, 2023, available at: <https://civil.ge/ka/archives/575743>, updated: 05.02.2024.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Prohibition of donations by legal entities to political parties and reduction of the upper ceiling of annual expenditures in relation to GDP.

²⁶ Venice Commission, OSCE/ODIHR joint opinion on draft amendments to the election code and to the rules of procedure of the parliament of Georgia, CDL-AD(2023)047 (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2023), available at: [https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/?pdf=CDL-AD\(2023\)047-e](https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/?pdf=CDL-AD(2023)047-e), updated: 05.02.2024.

²⁷ According to the amendments adopted in June 2023, the Parliament would elect the Chairman of the Central Election Commission (CEC) and 7 members, instead of the President, on the nomination of the Speaker of the Parliament. Additionally, the number of votes needed to elect a candidate for a 5-year term was reduced to a simple majority instead of the existing 2/3.

²⁸ The Organic Law of Georgia on Amendments to the Organic Law of Georgia “Election Code of Georgia”, available at: <https://shorturl.at/hrGST>, updated: 05.02.2024.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

of the position of the CEC deputy chairman selected under the opposition quota.³¹

In the evaluation document, the wording presented regarding the procedure for electing non-partisan members and the chairman of the CEC was assessed as “difficult” and “confusing”.³² It was also noted that the project of current changes was prepared in an accelerated manner without consulting the interested parties at the initiative of the ruling party.³³ It was emphasized in the report that with the initiated changes, the Georgian legislation departed from the consensus-oriented rules for staffing the Central Election Commission adopted as a result of the agreement of April 19, 2021.³⁴

The commission recommended significantly limiting the tenure of those appointed under the anti-deadlock mechanism. Additionally, the document negatively assessed the deprivation of the president’s power to create the competition commission and nominate candidates.³⁵ In addition, the Commission negatively evaluated the cancellation of the position of the opposition deputy of the CEC chairman.³⁶

The opinion emphasizes the importance of stable electoral law for public confidence and highlights the risks associated with frequent changes, which may lead to potential confusion for both voters and election authorities.³⁷

The report published by the Venice Commission was evaluated by the representatives of the ruling party and the opposition.

The representatives of “Georgian Dream” criticized the conclusion of the commission due to the lack of legal arguments.³⁸ According to Givi Mikanadze, “the Venice Commission indicates a return to the regulation presented in the April 19 agreement without legal argumentation.”³⁹ Mikanadze stated that representatives of the ruling party offered detailed explanations regarding the necessity of the proposed changes.⁴⁰

According to Giorgi Sioridze, the opposition deputy chairman of the CEC and a member of the “Lelo” party, the CEC is experiencing a crisis of legitimacy, and the election administration is confronted with its most significant challenge in terms of public trust. Sioridze criticized the draft law in practically all aspects.⁴¹ He also emphasized that the Venice Commission unequivocally supports what “Lelo” has been advocating for the past year and a half, which is that the CEC chairman and members should be elected by a 2/3 majority, rather than the proposed 3/5 majority and through the anti-deadlock mechanism. This aligns with the stipulations of the Charles Michel agreement, which ‘Georgian Dream’ unilaterally announced as nullified.⁴²

According to Giorgi Vashadze, the leader of ‘Strategy Agmashenebeli,’ ‘the conclusion of the Venice Commission indicates that “Georgian Dream” does not desire integration with the European Union, nor does it seek to attain candidate status.’⁴³ According to Vashadze, this is the reason for implementing such a “sham” reform.⁴⁴

³¹ Ibid.

³² Venice Commission, OSCE/ODIHR joint opinion on draft amendments to the election code and to the rules of procedure of the parliament of Georgia, CDL-AD(2023)047 (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2023), available at: [https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/?pdf=CDL-AD\(2023\)047-e](https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/?pdf=CDL-AD(2023)047-e), updated: 05.02.2024.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ “Venice Commission Opinion on Electoral Reform Received Different Reactions”, information portal Civil.ge, December 21, 2023, available at: <https://civil.ge/ka/archives/575447>, updated: 05.02.2024.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ “Giorgi Sioridze - the election reform proposed by the “Georgian Dream” has been criticized by the Venice Commission and the OSCE/ODIHR - it has been criticized in practically all parts”, information portal “Interpressnews”, December 20, 2023, available at: <https://shorturl.at/deDUV>, updated: 05.02.2024.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ “Venice Commission Opinion on Electoral Reform Received Different Reactions”, information portal Civil.ge, December 21, 2023, available at: <https://civil.ge/ka/archives/575447>, updated: 05.02.2024.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

3. CHANGES IN THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT

3.1. The former chairman of the United National Movement (UNM) Nika Melia is planning to create a political party

Nika Melia, the former chairman of the UNM, officially left the party on December 7 and announced his plans to create his own party.⁴⁵ According to Melia, he wants to create “the most righteous political party” and then qualifications, knowledge and vision will be built on this “truth”.⁴⁶

According to Mamuka Khazaradze, the leader of the “Lelo” party, the former chairman of the UNM, Nika Melia, who is planning to found a new opposition party, will be a strategic partner for “Lelo”.⁴⁷

3.2. The members left the United National Movement

On December 4-6, 10 members of the Khobi City Council, 14 members of the Zugdidi City Council and 7 members of the Batumi City Council left the National Movement due to the split between the acting leader of the party Levan Khabeishvili and the former chairman Nika Melia.⁴⁸ Also, three members of the Chokhatauri City Council left the faction. In the statement of Bacho Akhaladze, Khatuna Berishvili and Marine Tavadze, it is stated that they are moving from UNM to Nika Melia’s team.⁴⁹

The members of the Zugdidi City Council separated from the party at the briefing focused on the mistakes made by the party leadership and noted that they are planning to create a new platform.⁵⁰

Maia Kalandia, a deputy of the City Council and a long-time member of the National Movement, remarked that despite leaving the party, they remain committed to fundamental democratic values and the objective of securing the release of former president Mikheil Saakashvili from prison.⁵¹

In Tbilisi, about 300 members left the “United National Movement” party.⁵² They announced their resignation from the party on December 10 on Rustaveli Avenue.⁵³

4. BIDZINA IVANISHVILI RETURNED TO POLITICS

On December 30, at the congress of the ruling party, the founder of the “Georgian Dream” party, Bidzina Ivanishvili, announced his return to politics.⁵⁴ He took the position of honorary chairman of the party.⁵⁵ In his speech at the congress, Ivanishvili stated that the main goal of his return to politics is not to further strengthen the party, but ‘to protect an over-strengthened team from human temptations.’ He also mentioned that the ruling party would

⁴⁵ “Nika Melia plans to found a party”, information portal Radio Freedom, December 7, 2023, available at: <https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/32721166.html>, updated: 05.02.2024.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ “Khazaradze: Nika Melia and I will be strategic partners”, information portal “Radio Freedom”, December 27, 2023, available at: <https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/32748322.html>, updated: 05.02.2024.

⁴⁸ “About 30 party members left the “National Movement” in Khobi” information portal “Radio Freedom”, December 6, 2023, available at: <https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/32716787.html>, updated: 05.02.2024.

⁴⁹ “Three members of the Chokhatauri City Council left the National Movement and joined Melia’s team”, information portal Tabula, December 25, 2023, available at: <https://tabula.ge/ge/news/712345-chokhatauris-sakrebulos-samma-cevrma-natsionaluri>, updated: 05.02.2024.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² „About 300 members of Tbilisi organizations, including members of the Assembly, have left the “National Movement”, information portal “Radio Freedom”, December 10, 2023: <https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/32724165.html>, updated: 05.02.2024.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ “Bidzina Ivanishvili returns to politics in order to “protect the government from human temptations”, information portal “Civil.ge”, December 30, 2023, available at: <https://civil.ge/ka/archives/576223>, updated: 05.02.2024.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

secure 90-100 deputy mandates in the parliamentary elections even without a pre-election campaign.⁵⁶

The mentioned fact was assessed by representatives of both the ruling party and the opposition. Irakli Kobakhidze, the chairman of Georgian Dream, expressed gratitude to Bidzina Ivanishvili for the decision.⁵⁷ According to Kobakhidze, Ivanishvili's return to politics is an important event that will strengthen not only the "Georgian dream", but also the country as a whole.⁵⁸

According to Sofo Japaridze, representative of the UNM party, Ivanishvili's move proved once again that he never left Georgian politics.⁵⁹ Giga Bokeria, the leader of the "European Georgia" party, made a similar assessment and noted that, regardless of how actively he appears in public, the existence of Ivanishvili's regime is a challenge for Georgian society.⁶⁰

5. MOSHE KLUGHAFI AND MIRI MICHAELI WILL BE THE STRATEGIC ADVISORS OF GEORGIAN DREAM DURING THE ELECTION PERIOD

On December 12, "Georgian Dream" released a statement announcing that the party had signed a contract with Moshe Klughafit and Miri Michaeli, founders of the ACT NEWS company, to serve as the party's strategic advisors during the election period.⁶¹

Moshe Klughafit managed Salome Zourabichvili's campaign before the second round of the 2018 presidential elections.⁶² It is his name that is associated with the depiction of Georgian Dream leaders instead of Zourabichvili on election billboards.⁶³ Also, according to reports, he was in Tbilisi before the 2021 local government elections.⁶⁴ It's worth noting that prior to the 2021 municipal elections, there were instances of what came to be known as 'Bloody banners,' which depicted opposition leaders in a negative context with blood-like colors.⁶⁵ The representatives of the ruling party denied any connection with the mentioned banners.⁶⁶

6. THE US NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTE (NDI) PUBLISHED THE RESULTS OF PUBLIC OPINION

According to the results of a public opinion poll published by the US National Democratic Institute (NDI) on December 11, Georgian citizens overwhelmingly express support for the country's European integration, with 79% in favor, and Euro-Atlantic integration, with 67% in favor.⁶⁷

Poverty and economic problems are the main factors causing feelings of insecurity. In particular, 40% of respondents named poverty, 30% unemployment, 28% inflation, and 26% crime as the main cause of insecurity.⁶⁸

⁵⁶ "Bidzina Ivanishvili plans to perform the function of "center of gravity" in "Dream", information portal "Radio Freedom", December 30, 2023, available at: <https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/32753441.html>, updated: 05.02.2024.

⁵⁷ "Bidzina Ivanishvili's statement about her return to politics was met with reactions", information portal "Civil.ge", December 30, 2023, available at: <https://civil.ge/ka/archives/576257>, updated: 05.02.2024.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ "Georgian Dream" signed a pre-election contract with Moshe Klughafit, information portal "Radio Freedom", December 13, 2023, available at: <https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/32728668.html>, updated: 05.02.2024.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ "According to Kobakhidze, the photos of Zourabichvili on the billboards were changed on the advice of Moshe Klughafit", information portal "Radio Freedom", December 13, 2023, available at: <https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/32728782.html>, updated: 05.02.2024.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ "Georgian Dream" signed a pre-election contract with Moshe Klughafit", information portal "Radio Freedom", December 13, 2023, available at: <https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/32728668.html>, updated: 05.02.2024.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ "NDI Survey: Lack of Trust in Political Parties Ahead of 2024 Elections", Civil.ge news portal, December 11, 2023, available at: <https://civil.ge/ka/archives/573935>, updated: 05.02.2024.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

In addition, regardless of political sympathies, citizens worry about the negative consequences of emigration.⁶⁹ Based on the research findings, a significant portion of respondents, 62%, expressed a lack of confidence that any political party in Georgia adequately represents their interests. Additionally, 53% of respondents feel that deputies do not consider the opinions of individuals like themselves.⁷⁰

7. THE RULING PARTY CONTINUES TO ATTACK NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

The Chairman of the Parliament of Georgia, Shalva Papuashvili, leveled criticism at certain non-governmental organizations, alleging that they prioritize the interests of their “sponsors” over those of the country.⁷¹ Papuashvili asserted that certain NGOs, funded from abroad, advocate for delaying decisions on granting candidate status and imposing sanctions on Georgian citizens without substantiated evidence.⁷²

The mentioned statement was made by the Speaker of the Parliament after the European Commission presented the “Democracy Protection Package”, which includes the draft law on foreign influences.⁷³

According to Papuashvili, the European Union is initiating a draft law with exactly the same spirit and content, which was initiated by the “People’s Power” in Georgia, and it is called the “Democracy Protection Act”.⁷⁴

During the press conference, Vice-President of the European Commission, Věra Jourová, emphasized that the proposed legislation is distinct from what is commonly referred to as the “foreign agents” law, as it does not include provisions for criminal penalties, activity bans, or the labeling of entities with discriminatory terms.⁷⁵ According to her, there is a sustainable democracy in Europe, but it needs constant care and protection.⁷⁶

8. LEGAL ENTITIES WERE PROHIBITED FROM GIVING DONATIONS TO PARTIES

On December 15, the Parliament expedited the process and with 82 votes in favor, adopted the proposed amendments to the Law “On Political Unions of Citizens” and the “Election Code”. These amendments entail the prohibition of legal entities from making donations to political parties.⁷⁷ With the same changes, the upper limit of the total allowable amount of expenses incurred by the party during the year was reduced from 0.05% to 0.04% of the previous year’s gross domestic product.⁷⁸

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ “Papuashvili: “Multi-millionaire NGOs act in the interests of their funders”, news portal “Civil.ge”, December 14, 2023, available at: <https://civil.ge/ka/archives/574352>, updated: 05.02.2024.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ “The European Commission has presented a “democracy protection package”, which includes a draft law on foreign influence - “The time has come to expose hidden foreign influence”, the official website of the Public Broadcaster of Georgia, December 12, 2023, available at: <https://shorturl.at/bmpx1>, updated: 05.02.2024.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ “Parliament adopted the draft law in the third reading, which restricts the financing of parties by legal entities”, information portal “publika.ge”, December 15, 2023, available at: <https://publika.ge/parlamentma-iii-mosmenit-miigho-kanonproeqti-romelic-iuridiul-pirebs-partiebis-dafinansebas-uzghudavs/>, updated: 05.02.2024

⁷⁸ Ibid.

9. STATEMENT OF THE CEC REGARDING THE CREATION OF ELECTION PRECINCTS ABROAD

The CEC responded with a statement to the initiative ⁷⁹ related to the creation of election precincts for Georgian citizens living abroad on October 19. The CEC emphasized that collecting signatures on the request to open election precincts abroad would not yield legal results, as the legislation does not provide for such a procedure.⁸⁰

The statement clarified that, according to data from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, the Central Election Commission (CEC) establishes polling stations catering to no fewer than 50 and no more than 3,000 voters, no later than the 30th day prior to the election. Additionally, unified voter lists are compiled based on data provided to the CEC by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, specifically from Georgian citizens registered at consulates.⁸¹

On December 20, the political parties “Girchi-Meti Tavisupleba” and “Droa” issued a response to the statement made by the Central Election Commission (CEC). They emphasized their awareness of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ involvement in the process since the inception of the campaign. Consequently, Georgian citizens residing abroad directed their appeals not only to the CEC but also to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.⁸²

⁷⁹ Odikadze N. Newsletter No. 50, November, 2023 (Tbilisi, Georgian Young Lawyers’ Association, 2023), p. 5-6, the official website of the Georgian Young Lawyers’ Association, available at: <https://shorturl.at/huvP4>, updated: 05.02.2024.

⁸⁰ “Statement of the CEC regarding the creation of election precincts abroad” official website of the CEC, December 19, 2023, available at: <https://shorturl.at/atJQZ>, updated: 05.02.2024.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² “The CEC responds to the campaign to create election precincts abroad”, information portal “Civil.ge”, December 20, 2023, available at: <https://civil.ge/ka/archives/575307>, updated: 05.02.2024.